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CNN TRANSCRIPT:

ZAHN: The security watch continues with the CNN investigation into the billions being spent to protect you from an anthrax attack. And why some experts say, it's a waste of money.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

ZAHN: Welcome back. Guarding against bioterrorism, another part of tonight's security watch, a new report from the Trust For America's Health finds most states are not prepared for a bioattack. Yet, three years ago, five Americans died after inhaling anthrax. It was found inside anonymous letters sent to some news organizations in New York and Florida as well as to some politicians in Washington. While those attacks remain unsolved, they have prompted the federal government to order a new anthrax vaccine. But there are now questions about it just as there are questions about the safety of the current anthrax vaccine, given to some U.S. troops. Tom Foreman has this CNN investigation.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

EDDIE NORMAN, FMR. ARMY SGT.: I couldn't lift my pelvis. You went from one of the most fittest soldiers in the army, I mean, 300 PT, Goldstream awards to just nothing. I'm talking about in a matter of -- in a matter of a year, just nothing.

TOM FOREMAN, CNN CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): A veteran of both Gulf Wars, Eddie Norman believes that the army's anthrax vaccine physically destroyed him.

NORMAN: I was so swollen up at time that, I mean, I couldn't -- you couldn't even touch my body.

FOREMAN: Norman was given the complete series of eight shots of the vaccine before deploying to the Gulf in 2000. He says his immediate reactions to the shots were so severe, he was flown home for treatment.

NORMAN: I mean serious, serious pain. You know, they don't think, it is really hard for someone to imagine they haven't actually experienced this pain. You know, shaking, you know, in the night time. Uncontrollably shaking.

FOREMAN: The final diagnosis by his doctors, Eddie Norman had a muscular disorder called Fibromyalgia.

NORMAN: They say they suspect it to be the anthrax vaccine.

FOREMAN: Despite thousands of documented complaints like that of Eddie Norman, the government is developing a new vaccine. In July, a new law passed, Project Bioshield with a price tag of \$5.6 billion. It will create a

national stockpile of the new anthrax vaccine for the civilian population. Dr. David Ozonoff is an expert in infectious diseases and public health at Boston University.

DR. DAVID OZONOFF, BOSTON UNIVERSITY: The whole program is so badly thought out and unthought out.

FOREMAN: For more than a decade, troops deployed to the Persian Gulf were required to take Biothrax, the only existing anthrax vaccine but the Veterans Administration has documented more than a thousand cases of servicemen and women who blame Biothrax for a whole range of serious illnesses.

CHRISTINA KUTZ, FMR. SENIOR AIRMAN: 2003 was probably the worst year for me. I couldn't eat anything. I was throwing up constantly.

FOREMAN: Former senior airman Christina Kutz returned from Iraq in April 2003 knowing that she still had to complete the series of anthrax shots. There is no way I could say no because I didn't want to get court martialed and I couldn't see myself -- I like the military. I loved my job. I just couldn't do it. FOREMAN: But after her fourth injection in July, Kutz was told she had developed an intestinal ailment known as Crohn's Disease. She was given a waiver from further vaccinations.

David Ozonoff believes it is the vaccine's effectiveness that also makes it so harmful.

OZONOFF: Some of the antibodies that are manufactured against those organisms also work against parts of your own body.

FOREMAN: Colonel John Grabenstein heads up the army's vaccine agencies.

COL. JOHN GRABENSTEIN, ARMY VACCINE AGENCY: I think the debate's been settled. After we took 18 human safety studies to the National Academy of Sciences, the country's best scientists and they reached the conclusion after over a year and a half of considering the matter that the anthrax vaccine is as safe as other vaccines.

FOREMAN: But in November, a federal district court in Washington, D.C. ruled otherwise. Citing hundreds of complaints like those of Eddie Norman and Christina Kutz, the court sent the vaccine to the FDA for reexamination and halted mandatory inoculations. Now, as part of Project Bioshield, the government has awarded a contract worth more than \$1 billion to a small pharmaceutical company called VaxGen. It will manufacture 75 million doses of the new vaccine by 2007 for civilian use.

OZONOFF: There is no scenario that you can imagine that you would ever need that many. So, I don't know what's -- I don't know what the thinking was there. Or if there was any thinking.

FOREMAN: Dr. Lance Gordon is Vaxgen's CEO.

DR. LANCE GORDON, CEO, VAXGEN: The driving issue from the federal government was the need to get product into inventory in the quickest possible time with the highest probability of success.

FOREMAN (on camera): A clause impending bioshield legislation allows for fast tracking the anthrax vaccine. The new vaccine will be ready in 2007, but it will be untested and unlicensed by the Food and Drug Administration.

OZONOFF: But until there is that kind of public health emergency, I don't know why you would short-circuit the necessary safeguards.

FOREMAN (voice-over): Critics say the project amounts to an improper government subsidy, a windfall for Vaxgen, a company with some serious missteps in its recent past.

In 2003, Vaxgen withdraw its AIDS vaccines after faulty testy results were discovered. Last August, Vaxgen was delisted from the NASDAQ after its accounting practices were questioned by the SEC.

Despite that, the government gave Vaxgen the bioshield contract. GORDON: I believe that their judgment was that we were the most reliable company, having a product available to meet the urgent need. Something I'm very proud of.

FOREMAN: But under the pending bioshield legislation, Vaxgen and other manufacturers cannot be held liable for illnesses caused by the new vaccine. And whether or not the drug works, many experts question whether it is needed at all. It is very difficult to fashion a weapon of mass destruction out of anthrax.

OZONOFF: Only a handful of people know the secrets to weaponizing anthrax. It's very, very hard to do.

FOREMAN: And inhaled anthrax can be treated with antibiotics, all which amounts to a seriously flawed program, says Ozonoff.

OZONOFF: If you wanted to beef up public health in this country, you sure wouldn't want to do it this way. It is sort of like trying to, you know, make Tang by inventing the space program.

FOREMAN: Vaxgen vows that its new anthrax vaccine will be better than the old one, though its potential for serious side effects remains unknown.

GORDON: The safety is already largely established, but again, you know, we're not going to challenge humans with anthrax and potentially kill them to test the vaccine.

FOREMAN: In the meantime, two months short of retirement, Eddie Norman is struggling with the effects of the current vaccine.

EDDIE NORMAN, FORMER ARMY SGT.: I got pain through here now, but I've got to work, you know? You know, I have to. If I don't work, then my family is out on the streets.

FOREMAN: And Christina Kutz' hopes of going back to the Army are fading.

CHRISTINA KUTZ, FORMER SENIOR AIRMAN: I'll probably never be able to go back in, unless they misdiagnosed me or a miracle.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

ZAHN: Our Tom Foreman reporting tonight.

The maker of Biothrax, the BioPort Corporation, canceled an interview with CNN and then didn't return our calls. But today, the company did give us this statement.

Quote, "BioPort Corporation takes adverse events very seriously and thoroughly investigates every report. We are confident of our vaccine's safety and efficacy, which has been repeatedly affirmed by several government agencies, including the FDA, CDC and DoD, as well as the prestigious Institute of Medicine. More than 1.3 million soldiers have been protected with licensed anthrax vaccine since 1998." So how great of danger is all of this for you? There may be no one who knows more about medicine and bioterrorism than Dr. Anthony Fauci of the National Institutes of Health. I'll be talking with him next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

ZAHN: Welcome back.

We are continuing our discussion about anthrax. Perhaps nobody knows more about the dangers posed by bioterrorism and the reliability of vaccines to protect us than Dr. Anthony Fauci. He is the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the National Institutes of Health.

Always good to see you. Welcome, Dr. Fauci.

DR. ANTHONY FAUCI, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ALLERGY AND INFECTIOUS DISEASES, NIH: Thank you, Paula. Good to be here.

ZAHN: Dr. Fauci, we know with the old vaccine that in 10 percent of the inoculations, people got very, very sick. What proof do you have that you won't have the same numbers with the new vaccine?

FAUCI: The clinical trials of the safety will tell us that, Paula. And the way the vaccine is formulated, what it is, the purity of the material would be strongly suggestive that you're not going to see a substantial amount of adverse events.

ZAHN: When will we know for sure, Dr. Fauci?

FAUCI: Well, the safety studies are ongoing now. We've done some before. We've also got to do efficacy studies in animals.

And I would say that by the time we're ready to make that first milestone in 2006, we'll be rather sure in a substantial way that we're dealing with something that's safe.

ZAHN: We're going to quickly take a look at a graphic, which basically reinforces something that a report on bioterror preparation by the Trust for America's Health did.

Only six states in this country are adequately prepared to distribute and administer vaccines and antidotes in case of an emergency. So would this

vaccine even get to the people who need it?

FAUCI: Well, I think it will. Obviously, there is work that needs to be done at the state and local health arena to get the responsiveness capability better than it is now.

It was much worse than it is now. When we started, we, the government and the Department of Health and Human Services, under Secretary Thompson, started putting money into the state and local health infrastructure to build it up. It improved it markedly but there's still a ways to go. We've shown that we can respond at the local and state level with challenges like we've seen, for example, with SARS, which luckily didn't hit us hard. But I don't disagree that there is work to be done of getting preparedness at the state and local public health level.

ZAHN: How troubling is it to you that most states don't even have one these preparedness plans?

FAUCI: Well, that is troublesome, and the CDC is working very closely with the states to try and work with them, to bring along their plan. They've put out a formula about a timetable of getting a plan, of making sure that the plan is a viable plan.

The CDC has been very hard at work, working locally with the state and local health departments.

ZAHN: We hope no one ever has to execute that plan. Dr. Fauci...

FAUCI: I hope not.

ZAHN: ... thank you so much for joining us tonight.

FAUCI: You're quite worth it.

ZAHN: I appreciate it.

And remember to stay with CNN day and night for reliable news about your security.

Coming up next, politics and murder, and why the poisoned Ukrainian presidential candidate can call himself a lucky man. That's next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)